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SHILOH. 4/6 38

A SERMON.

"The Lord appeared again; in Shiloh."—I. Sam. iii. 21.

Shiloh, is henceforth to be one of precious names in the history of the Confederate States. With it will be associated as with those other names, derived from the Holy scriptures, Bethel and Manassas, the idea of victory—God given victory. The etymological import of all these names is impressively significant. Bethel signifies "the place or house of God." "the place where God reveals himself." And this sweet name we are permitted by the Providence of God, to associate with our first victory; by which we may fondly hope, the Lord intimated His ultimate purpose of delivering us from the wrath and oppression of our foes. If God favors the right cause, and the name is at all indicative of His efficient revealing of his own power and grace, then our enemies had reason to dread assailing us near any place with such a name as Bethel.

Manassas signifies, "causing to forget." When Joseph gave this name to his first born son in Egypt the reason is thus given, "God hath made me forget all my toil and all my father's house."

And after the wonderful battle which bears that name, we flattered ourselves that we might forget the toils and struggles that led to it, and anticipate henceforward rest and peace. We said, "it is Manassas" and now we will forget our toils and the wrongs we have suffered in what we were accustomed to call the house of our fathers. And alas for us! Manassas did cause us to forget, too guiltily, that our strength and dependence were in God. In our exultation we forgot our trust, in our pride we forgot the humility which God loveth.

Too much like the fourteenth king of Judah, who was named Manasseh we set up idols in the temple of the Lord and worshipped images of our own making. Like him too we have been scourged of the Lord by the hands of our enemies and driven for a season out of at least a portion of our rightful territories. And like him to, I trust many of us in our calamities, have renounced our false dependencies, repented of our wanderings, renewed our allegiance and covenant with Him, and regained His protecting favor. May no future Manassas again cause us to forget and practically repudiate our God.

And now we have, *Shiloh*. There are two prominent philological meanings which the learned have given to this name. We will dwell for a little upon both, hoping that we may find in either a good omen for our cause. One meaning insisted upon by many critical authorities is, "The Desired," "The Asked or," "The Longed for."

How beautifully appropriate is this meaning of the word "Shiloh" to us. It is the Desired, the Longed for. This victory we have been praying for earnestly, devoutly tearfully, in the closet, at the family altar, in the church, and in our daily prayer meetings. He who heareth the cry of His children, hath listened in pity to our importunities and hath given us Shiloh—what we have desired and prayed for. Brethren, is there not a connection between the prayers of God's people and the victory we have gained. Why do we pray if we do not believe it? We may not be able to trace the cord, which prayer casts up, to encircle the arm of Jehovah, and then draw down its might upon the head of our oppressors. Its end may fly beyond our scope of vision, be lost in the distances which sight cannot pierce. We are concious of the effort, and we see the results, and we will be contented to remain in ignorance of the intervening processes an agencies. There are arachnidan insects which are said to be capable of spinning a long, slender thread, out upon a current of air, which wafts it upward until it fastens itself to the ceiling of a room or the limb of a tree, thus forming a ladder up which the tiny creatures climbs to its desired position. We have like power by prayer. The burdened heart throws out its cords, which, wafted upward by the spirit's breath, fasten themselves upon the hand of God,

and draw us up to Him or draw that hand down to us. All over this land, christians have prayed in penitent earnestness, have gotton hold of the arm of Jehovah, and brought it down upon our enemies heads. What we longed for has been granted. We prayed for it and God has given us Shiloh—the desired, the asked for. What an encouragement to beg for still greater favors. We need more interpositions of God's hand. He is trying our faith and perseverance. Will our humility and profound sense of dependence stand the test of victory? Oh! shall we not, encouraged, faith-stengthened by attaining the longed for, implore larger mercies—for the defeats of our foes are mercies to us. Let us not fail to acknowledge his interference and give Him the glory—but the more faithfully walking in His commandments and clinging to His strength, press on to the great end, desired and longed for.

But the study of learned Expositors has discovered another meaning of the name. They call Shiloh, "The Tranquilizer," "The Pacification," "The great author of Peace." May we not hope that in this sense, Shiloh may be the beginning of a series of successes which shall bring peace to us. It is a sad illustration of the ruin wrought by sin that man never attains peace but through strife. Even the innocent child must have its struggle with death, before entering upon the rest of heaven. The convicted sinner must pass through a desperate warfare with himself before he can attain to the peace of God. The saint knows in his own inner experience that strife precedes peace. And the nations have gained peace only through battles. Though this may not be the struggle that shall result in peace to the convulsed nation, yet there must come a battle which will decide the great contest. With or without the name that battle will be the Shiloh—the procurer of peace. It cannot require many such contests to convince our enemies that their ambitious and tyrannical purposes are impracticable; that they must settle these controversies as prudence and wisdom would have settled them at first, without violence and murder. We are fighting for peace. We want peace for ourselves and we are anxious to live in peace with our neighbors and the world. Oh! what joy it would bring to our suffering and distracted land, if this etymological signification of the name Shiloh,

could be answered, and that bloody battle field prove the Pacificator from which should issue the negociations which sooner or later must come, that shall result in the recognition of our indisputable right to self government, in the cessation of hostilities and the restoration of peace. We hail with joy the omens which this name suggests and will pray that they may be fulfilled.

With these remarks suggested by such auspicious names, let us pass to a more particular discussion of the text. *The Lord appeared again; in Shiloh.*

I. It is first implied that the Lord had appeared before. "Again" involves the idea of a previous revealing of Himself. This was true as it related to the history of Israel. Again and again had Jehovah restored to them His favor, so often forfeited by their rebellion and guilt. So has it been with this nation. Infinitely beyond our deservings has the Lord revealed to us His favoring mercies. Our remorseless enemies, confident and boastful of greater numbers and superior resources, have been reluctantly compelled to admit over again the divine apothegm, "The battle is not always to the strong." God has appeared for us, and our marshalled forces, contemned and ridiculed, as too few and weak for effective resistance to such numbers and might—as dissolute and ragged and ignorant and miserably armed—have held the braggart foe at bay for more than a year. Through God's favor we have driven his efficiently equipped armies from many a battle field and at this hour hold them in check at all their selected points of assault. We cannot attribute these mercies, to greater numbers, to ampler resources, to more effective implements of war, to superior drill and discipline, for in all we have been inferior. To what then shall we attribute it? The text is the answer—"The Lord hath appeared" for us.

How applicable to us also as individuals is this text. To you, sinner, the Lord hath often appeared, in his providence checking your rebellious depravity, taking from you the objects behind which you hid yourself from His claims—by afflictions teaching you His sovereignty and the need for His favor—and by mercies appealing to your gratitude, obedience and love. In his gospel, through a pious father's instructions and a mother's prayers, through the

teachings of your youth, by the voice of conscience and by the call of His Spirit, God hath often appeared and revealed His will to you. In the long catalogue of means of grace by which he would draw you to himself has He manifested Himself. And to you too, child of God, has He often appeared drawing you from sin, forgiving your wanderings, comforting you in sorrows, answering your prayers, delivering you from temptations and perils. We have each of us many reasons gratefully to own, "the Lord hath appeared unto me."

II. The text implies further, than there are *intermissions of these revealings of God's favor.* There are spaces between then, and again. When I say "again" the Lord has come, I intimate that He has been absent from my soul—I mean that His favor has been withdrawn. Like Job, I cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find him." "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there, backward, but I cannot preceive Him, on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold Him, He hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see Him." Even the gracious soul often mourns the hidings of His face. These are the most distressing phases in the cristian's experience.

And if the careless transgressor will only examine into his own experiences, he to may convince himself that God draws nearer to him at some times than at others. There are seasons when he hears no call of God's voice, scarce any complaints of that divine monitor within his own conscience, seasons during which he can sin almost without any alarm or compunction. How sad your condition when God withdraws from you, when He leaves you to your own follies and unchecked wanderings. Do I speak to any now, who seem to themselves to be thus forsaken of God, who can transgress His laws with impunity, who can press down the broad road, without terror or remorse. You can look back to the time when God appeared and spoke to you, and clearly proffered to your soul forgiveness and favor. Oh, wretched state when He withdraws these tokens of His presence and grace.

Through such a period too we seem to have passed in our recent national experience, for God deals with nations as with individuals. One reverse after another has humbled us, and called us back to the true source of strength and success. We hear with sad depression of soul the names of Roanoke

and Newbern, of Henry and Donaldson. What has driven Him from us? The cause was as essentially righteous at Roanoke as at Bethel, at Donaldson as at Manassas. Why then have we been humbled before our enemies? Perhaps in His sovereignty God sees that unmixed prosperity will not be best for our future good. He who disciplines His servents by affliction, thus preparing them for usefulness on earth and for the blessedness of Heaven, He who has sanctified his church by trials and tracked her pathway by the blood of her martyrs, He who made "even the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings," leads infant nations too. through disasters, to a more solid and permanent prosperity than they could otherwise obtain. Without some such reverses, we should be proud, self-exultant, boastful, self-reliant. We should say in our independence, "Is not this great Babylon that we have built?" "Our own hands have gotton all this." God is jealous of His own glory. He will not give his praise to another. He will, I believe, lead us to independence of the northern government, but he will not leave us in independence of Himself. If we abandon our trust in Him, He will abandon us to our own resources, and make our enemies His rod for our chastisement.

III. Still further the text suggests *the renewed appearing of the Lord*, "He appeared again." Oh, with what rapture does the abandoned saint hail once more the light of His smile. When after a season of withdrawal, in some hour of despondent yet earnest prayer, the Lord lifts up upon the spirit, the light of His countenance, it is like the darting of bright sunbeams through a storm-fraught cloud.

Among the happiest hours of the christian's life are those in which he thus regains the conscious favor of the Lord, a sweet assurance of forgiving love, an admission to that intimacy of communion with his Heavenly Father, in which he can in filial love confess his wanderings and implore restoration, in which he hears the forgiving, re-adopting voice that owns him as a child, and whispers peace and comfort to his soul. This is a blessedness unknown to the world.

And sometimes too the Lord renews his calls to the impenitent sinner. After seeming to have left him for a season He again visits him by some providence, by some call of warning, or threatening, or promise, awakens him to a sense

of his danger and guilt, and presses upon his soul the claims of Jesus Crucified. Then again is the time of his visitation. Neglect it and to you, as to Jerusalem, Jesus may say, "Oh that thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day the things that make for thy peace." When God does thus draw near to you sinner, then "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." It may be the last call, of Jesus to your soul. Do you not feel that you ought now to settle the great controversy between God and yourself, and become a devout and true hearted disciple of Jesus? Oh, yield and meet with a submissive heart to the visits of God.

And may we not too, hope and believe that to our struggling nation, "the Lord hath appeared again; in Shiloh?" We have prayed for victory. One victory has been granted. In this one instance the longed for has been granted. It may not yet be as decisive in its immediate results as we had hoped, it may not prove directly the Peace bringer, and yet we may expect it to have an important bearing upon the issues of the great struggle. We may hope and pray that it may be the first, in this campaign, of a series of triumphs that will prove to our enemies the hopelessness of their ambitious and nefarious schemes, that will compel the surrender of our invaded territories, that will inaugurate the negociations that shall result in peace. Oh! it is right for us to rejoice in such a victory and to strike the timbrel in gratitude and praise, as did Miriam upon the shores of the Red Sea over the overthrown and destroyed Egyptians.

And yet, not without grief and sympathy with the suffering and the bereaved, can we rejoice over a victory. Many of our brave sons have poured out all the blood of their hearts in struggling for the triumph. Many are yet groaning in pain from the wounds that torture them. There is trembling in many a home not yet reached by the intelligence of the fate of the loved that were in the battle. There are widows made desolate; weeping to-day over groups of children left fatherless, for whose support and welfare they are now to struggle and toil alone. Many a father groans, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away also." Among the lost we mourn most deeply the fall of the gallant leader of the army, not because his life in itself was more precious than that of others, but be-

cause our cause has lost the wisdom and skill that long years of study and experience had accumulated in a single mind. Nor will we withhold the sigh of compassion from the slaughtered of our enemies. We may weep even for the guilty malefactor who dies by sentence of the law, while we would not arrest that sentence. We regret the anguish and sorrow which our foes have brought upon themselves, by their wicked inroads into the territories of a people who have doubtless as good right to govern themselves, and to choose their own rulers, as any other people on the earth which God has made for all. Sad, amid such carnage and grief, we may and ought to be, even while exultation and praise for the victory thrills our souls.

But the most cheering association of all that connects itself with this victory is, that God has revaled Himself as our shield and defence. "THE LORD appeared again; in Shiloh." Can we take the praise to ourselves? I would withhold none of the honor due to our brave sons for their fidelity and courage. They deserve our gratitude and praise; all the rewards and honors which a grateful country can bestow. But they were the willing agents through whom GOD wrought. Let us not offend Him by denying or doubting His interposition and aid. An army comparatively poorly clad and poorly armed, has met and mastered an army of at least equal numbers, said to have been one of the best equipped and prepared for battle that the world has ever seen. What with such differences, has turned the victory to our side? After admitting the operation of all secondary causes, what other conclusion can we reach than this—the God of battles favored our cause? Now, let us keep God on our side by recognizing and praising Him—by self-distrust; and confidence in Him—by obedience and love. Let us remember—"When thy brethren go up to battle then keep thee from every wicked thing."

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